

By physically going to the river and passing along a special canteen from one community to the next we illuminate the point that we all live downstream. It is imperative that we find ways to protect and honor our rivers.

Please extend your hand to someone upstream, receive the canteen, add your own small contribution of water from the Nisqually River, write in the log book, and pass these along to another person downstream. The canteen (an Evergreen State College metal drinking container) and its accompanying logbook (a 'Write-in-the-Rain' notebook) will travel by kayak, fishing boat, canoe, car, tractor, horseback, truck, bicycle, by foot or any means of transport. The logbook and canteen are housed in pouches made of rubber hip waders like those worn by fisher people along the Nisqually.

An aim for the gathering and passing of these river waters is to generate understanding, enthusiasm, a sense of continuity and a mutual respect among riverside communities. It is a celebration of this wonderful river and the flora, fauna and people who appreciate and depend on her.

The Evergreen State College is pleased to sponsor the Gathering of Waters Project facilitated by eco-artist Basia Irland. We invite your participation and ideas. For further information please contact Lucia Harrison, Member of the Faculty at The Evergreen State College, (360)-867-6486 (harrisol@evergreen.edu) or Ann Friedman, Director of The Evergreen State College Galleries, (360) 867-5425, (friedma@evergreen.edu).



Basia Irland, Backpack and Canteen

"It's a wonderful project: a grassroots, community-based initiative to collect and convey water from a river's source all along its course to a release point."

Dr. David Williams; Dartington School of Art; Devon, England

A GATHERING OF WATERS: THE NISQUALLY RIVER, SOURCE TO SOUND



Basia Irland, Nisqually Glacier, 2008

"The Gathering of Waters is a major model for 'eco-art.' This relatively new kind of art is often invisible within the landscape. But its powerful ripple effects can make waves within the various societies through which it passes."

Lucy Lippard; art critic and author

You are enthusiastically invited to participate in a special Gathering of Waters project creating a communal connection along the Nisqually River. This grassroots group effort will involve the many diverse peoples living along the entire length of the river.

The emphasis of A Gathering of Waters is on process: grassroots, collaborative, and locally based actions. Each community decides how it can best utilize the arrival of the river vessel. The way this project is organized allows for flexibility of focus on important scientific and artistic outcomes. And serendipity always plays a major part in the Gathering's process.

Seventy-eight miles in length, the Nisqually River has been witness to a long, rich history. It is the only river in the United States that begins within a National Park and ends in a National Wildlife Refuge. The path of the river flows from a glacier on Mount Rainier (Ta-co-bet, Ta-ho-ma) through farmland, reservoirs, Fort Lewis, Nisqually tribal lands, and into Puget Sound. It forms waterfalls, distributes huge rocks across wide boulder fields, gouges out canyons and forms a fan-shaped bio-diverse delta. Humans have blocked its flow behind dams to provide drinking water for urban areas, choked its waters with toxins, cut trees that once held its banks. But, thankfully, today, there are dozens of groups working to assist the Nisqually River.

We will create a video documentary about this Gathering. Also a sculptural backpack constructed from local materials will become the repository for all of the information and artifacts gathered during this time. It will hold the scientific data, water samples, photographs, video documentary, and other relevant art objects and information. As commemoration and thank-you for work on the project, each participant will be

presented with a handmade gift.

Through an encompassing ethic of inclusion, the diversity of life along the river will be celebrated again and again as the container passes downstream, hand to hand. Dr. Gregory Cajete of the Pueblo of Santa Clara writes in *Look To the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*, "...cultural diversity is as important to human ecology as biodiversity. Human beings interpenetrate, not only with one another, but also with the life around them -- the breath and lifeways of trees, grass, earth, water, rocks, animals, and natural phenomena."

The facilitator for this Gathering of Waters project is Basia Irland, Professor Emerita, University of New Mexico, Department of Art and Art History. She has created other Gatherings in New Mexico, Colorado, Canada and England. Her work can be viewed in *Water Library*, University of New Mexico Press, 2007. She looks forward to working with you.



River Meets Sound, Basia Irland, 2008

Suggestions for participation:

1. Please add a small (thimble) amount of water from the Nisqually River to the canteen. You may place small dried objects in one of the eleven small containers.
2. In the logbook, write your name, e-mail, and home address (so you can be sent a gift): then write comments about the river, the objects, or create a drawing, poem, or whatever you would like to add.
3. Anyone of any age can take part. Invite your family or friends. Have a picnic by the river. Invent your own celebration or ceremony. There are no rules – just that the canteen and logbook make it downstream and be safely returned to the artist.
4. If you have a camera, please document yourself or activities. E-mail the images to Lucia Harrison or Ann Friedman (see reverse side). If the images are on paper, please put them into the pocket with the logbook. The canteen, logbook, and backpack will be exhibited at The Evergreen State College gallery in April – and so you will be part of this show.
5. Pass the canteen and logbook to someone else downstream. Each participant joins the flow – forming a kind of human river and creating a caring ripple effect of action on behalf of this body of water.
6. When the canteen, full of Nisqually River water, reaches the delta, community participants will release the mingled waters into Puget Sound during a ceremony offering respect and gratitude to this great river.

Thanks for your participation, Basia Irland